



# Washington State Department of Agriculture

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## **FFA, WSDA launch Career Day for high school students**

**OLYMPIA** –A new collaboration between the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and the Washington Future Farmers of America (FFA) Foundation will inspire high school students to exciting careers in agriculture and open their eyes to the wide range of WSDA’s essential services.

This October, teams of WSDA employees and FFA educators will coordinate WSDA Career Day, a full-day educational event in five agricultural communities around Washington. At each site, 20 high school students will learn about numerous WSDA programs, watch WSDA professionals in action and then get some hands-on experience in the field.

“There’s a myth circulating out there that there are no professional opportunities in agriculture,” said WSDA Director Dan Newhouse. “Nothing could be further from the truth. WSDA has many interesting career paths that are vital to the integrity of the agriculture economy. We hope some of these students, when they complete their education, are inspired to join our department.”

WSDA employees facilitate the movement of food and agriculture products in local, national and international markets, promote public health and safety, and protect the natural environment. WSDA Career Day events will educate students about the range of services WSDA provides, as well as highlight careers open to candidates with a range of educational attainment – from high school graduates to Doctors of Veterinary Medicine.

“The Washington FFA Foundation is thrilled to partner with WSDA on the first ever Career Day,” said FFA Foundation Executive Director Stewart Padelford. “Our goal is to expose FFA members to the many employment opportunities available within the WSDA. Ultimately, we would love to see all FFA members employed within the public and private sectors of the agriculture industry. There are many exciting and challenging careers in agriculture that require knowledge in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.”

The five WSDA Career Day events are:

- Yakima on Oct. 3 – Students will participate in Fruit and Vegetable Inspection processes, tour an apple packing facility, hunt for invasive insects, identify destructive agricultural pests and explore other services essential to the state’s \$2 billion tree fruit industry.

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- Whatcom County on Oct. 5 – FFA members will visit a veterinary hospital, a dairy farm, a cheese plant, and milk bottler to explore animal health, food safety and environmental protection on Washington's 450 dairies.
- Spokane on Oct. 9 – Participants will explore grain, potato and straw inspection activities critical to Eastern Washington producers, use cutting-edge Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Position System (GPS) technologies, and learn about pesticide inspections that protect public health and environmental quality.
- Wenatchee on Oct. 10 – Students will tour Stemilt's world-class fruit packing facility, a local orchard and WSDA's East Wenatchee offices to learn about Fruit & Vegetable Inspection, Good Agricultural Practices intended to reduce public health risks associated with fresh produce, orchard pest detection and eradication, and organic certification of tree fruit.
- Snohomish County on Oct. 11 – A day at nursery and greenhouse operations will include an overview of regulatory inspections of containerized and field-grown nursery stock, as well as demonstrations and hands-on experiences in pest detection and eradication techniques.

Students interested in participating in WSDA Career Day apply through their school's FFA teacher. FFA will select applicants based on their intentions to pursue careers in agriculture, enrollment in high school agriculture education classes and active participation in FFA.

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